

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL MARK HERTLING, TRAINING AND DOCTRINE COMMAND, DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL - INITIAL MILITARY TRAINING VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ DATE: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2010

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LINDY KYZER (Army Public Affairs): Thank you, everyone, for joining us on the line. Very pleased to have with us today Lieutenant General Mark Hertling. He's the Training and Doctrine Command Deputy Commanding General for Initial Military Training joining us live this week from the Initial Military Training Forum.

So with that, I'll turn it over to you, General Hertling, for a few opening remarks.

GEN. HERTLING: Thanks, and I appreciate it.

And thanks, everybody, for tuning in, but more importantly, just appreciate you being interested in what we're doing down here.

As many of you know, in September of 2009 General Dempsey stood up Initial Military Training and asked me to be the deputy. And this is a position that focuses on what we're doing in the training base, from basic training, advanced skills training, newly-commissioned officers training. And that doesn't sound like a very sexy topic, but as I sometimes tell the folks I'm working with, it's the least sexy, most important thing that we do in the Army, is train civilians and newly-commissioned officers to enter the force.

Over the last six months we've conducted a holistic review of how we're training skills, values inculcation, physical training. And all that has been informed by the lessons we've learned over eight years of war: Some new things we're seeing with regard to technology and how that will improve the way we train; some new learning methodologies which we are incorporating; but also, just as importantly, as many of you know, a new generation of soldiers, the so-called "Millennials," who are bringing in capabilities and are very different than we've ever seen before.

Right now, this week, we've been -- we've been holding here in Columbia, South Carolina, outside Fort Jackson, a conference with all the commanders within IMT. As part of the reorganization, General Dempsey has allowed me to be, as you all know from the military standpoint, the senior (raters ?) of the training brigade commanders. Now, I senior-rate 18 brigade commanders all over the country, plus two Reserve Component training divisions. And that's sort of new too, as we've incorporated the Reserve Component within the training base.

But we also have all the supporters of those guys here -- folks who are running the reception battalions, the commandant of the Drill Sergeant School, Command Sergeant Major King, who's gotten a lot of media attention recently as the first female of the Drill Sergeant School. We just had a presentation, that just ended, from the Army Center for the Professional Military Ethic at West Point. They're doing some things in terms of values training for us, Victory University from here at Fort Jackson, and a bunch of other folks.

So, all in all, we have about 200 people down here that are trainers from all over the country inside the training base. And we're talking about how, and what, and why we train things. And that's been going on for the past six months. And really, during this conference, we're slapping the table on a couple of issues that we've changed and adapted in some of the areas and talking about where we're going to go next.

So I guess you could call that my introductory statement. And from there I'm prepared to take any questions, or throw some more things on the table if you all are interested in something specific.

MS. KYZER: Great. We'll go down the line with questions.

Dale Kissinger with MilitaryAvenue, did you have a question?

Q Yes, sir. This is Dale. A quick question of -- concerning, what's the number-one task that you're finding, from the forum, that you need to go back and address in military training? GEN. HERTLING: You know, Dale, I'm not sure I could rank-order them, because there are some that are important.

Here's what I'd tell you, I just told the group: As we do initial training for soldiers coming into the base from being civilians, soldiers that are transferring from basic training to their advanced skills training of the AIT, and newly-commissioned lieutenants, I kind of put them into three categories:

One category are the skills, and we can tinker around the edges determining what skills we teach and how we teach them. And I'll give you the example of rifle marksmanship: You know, we've done some studies over the last few years, and with the changing operational environment we've adjusted the way we train something as simple as basic rifle marksmanship, which today is very different than it has been over the last 50 years, from, you know, World War II, even World War I, when you get a soldier on a range and he shoots. Given the kind of environment

we're in, the training to prepare the soldier for that environment is very different. But those are relatively easy things to do -- changing the things we do in terms of skills training.

The second piece, the second "block," if you will, is physical training. What we're seeing that we're getting from the civilian environment are civilians from our society who are increasingly obese. They're increasingly out of shape because of -- well, technologies, the Wii generation, and Xbox, and things like that. Kids are not playing as much. They're not taking PE courses in schools. So we're really succinctly looking at how we physically improve capabilities, while at the same time not breaking soldiers, in terms of bone damage or muscle damage. So that's the second area.

And the third important area -- and this is the one we just finished talking about, is the inculcation of values. And, again, taking a soldier -- or a civilian from the society that they come from, and inculcating them into the professional ethos that we have, is pretty tough, especially as the societal values are changing. And we have to build a soldier that understands the environment that they are operating in. And that has to do with not only the "Seven Army Values" that we proudly display, but also things like how to understand other cultures when we get there.

That's a very long answer, and I apologize for that. But I couldn't really say there is one "most important" thing. It's all within those categories of three areas that each one has an important thing associated with it.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you very much. That was great.

GEN. HERTLING: Okay, thanks, Dale.

MS. KYZER: And Jeff Schogol, with Stars and Stripes, did you have a question? Q Yes, thank you.

Can you talk about what, if any, extra training you're looking at giving new recruits in recognizing and dealing with symptoms of traumatic brain injury or Post Traumatic Stress?

GEN. HERTLING: Yeah, that's a great question, Jeff. And first of all, hello again. It's been a long time since we've talked.

But it's kind of difficult because the new trainers -- correction, the new trainees don't experience, or haven't experienced the things like traumatic brain injury, because they haven't been in combat yet. Now, I mean, they may have had football injuries, or the like, and all that's part of the mental processing that we put them through in the recruiting stations and the MEP stations.

But what we are doing -- and the chief of staff of the Army has brought about this initiative called "Comprehensive Soldier Fitness," what we are trying to do is determine a baseline for our soldiers' level of resiliency.

And over the years that that soldier will be in the service, they're given opportunities in this new program -- which has yet to be started, but we're going to begin testing on this within the training base in April -- we actually do a baseline test on soldiers to determine their levels of resiliency in four different areas: societal, spiritual, emotional and physical. Then, over the years, they have the potential, as they continue their service, to undertake modules which will help them in those four areas. We think that that will provide a more resilient soldier. This is an initiative that's being led by Brigadier General Rhonda Cornum, and it's being incorporated in the training base.

Along with that, we have been sending drill sergeants, and AIT platoon sergeants, and cadre from our officer leader course to the University of Pennsylvania over the last couple of months to a resiliency training course that's being held there. That will soon transfer to Victory University at Fort Jackson, which is an Army institution, and we'll begin training our trainers to be instructors in resiliency and to be more resilient themselves.

Again, I'm sorry, a long answer to a short question, but I'm verbose this morning.

Q Well, thank you very much.

MS. KYZER: And Christian Lowe, with Military.com, did you have a question?

Q Yes.

Hi, General Hertling. Thanks for joining us here.

I want to steer you back to the teaser that we got sent out the other day about this interview, and there were two bullet points in there that I'd like you to hit, if you don't mind.

GEN. HERTLING: I'm in trouble already because I didn't see the teasers. But, go ahead. (Laughs.)

Q Well, so I can just put a landmine in front of you and maybe you'll step right on it. But I won't do that, actually, because these are very simple. And this may be -- this may not be new for some of the callers, but it's new to me: One of the bullet points was how the U.S. Army reviewed and revised basic combat training plan of instruction, and Warrior Task(s) and Battle Drill(s) with input from the field. And then the other was, standards and training across Initial Military Training.

GEN. HERTLING: Right.

Q Give us some meat here, some red meat. What are some of the things that you revised --

GEN. HERTLING: Oh, okay. Yes, now --

Q -- and what are some of the standards that changed in the IMT?

GEN. HERTLING: Yeah, now that's very easy. Thank you.

Well, first, let me talk about what we've done. In October we pulled together, first, a group of individuals, about 150 people -- from the training base; we had representatives from the operational base; some folks from, some key people from Forces Command; but also, within Forces Command, the folks who actually contact with new soldiers, and those are company commanders and first sergeants; we brought in some individuals from our training centers, both NTC and JRTC, a couple of sergeant majors; we brought in some folks from the various Army commands, like NETCOM and INSCOM -- that all came together and took a look, first of all, at these things called the "Warrior Task(s) and Battle Drills," which were something, a group of tasks that the TRADOC initiated about, oh, I guess, about five or six years ago, which has steadily grown over the last six years, and they have almost become too onerous and too designing of a infantry soldier, as opposed to a basic soldier.

So over a three-day conference in Hampton, Virginia we took a look at those Warrior Task(s) and Battle Drills because, in effect, they weren't very well known by the force. They were something that were almost exclusively placed, by most of the force, within the basic training environment, where that was never their original design. It was supposed to be the skills and tasks that every soldier should perform and should be repetitively trained and taught in all installations at all ranks. And they had become too lengthy.

And if you pulled together any group of soldiers -- and I'd challenge you to do this today, say, "Name for me one of the current Warrior Task(s) and Drills," they couldn't do it. How did I know this? Well, I just came from being a division commander in the 1st Army Division and I didn't know it, and I don't think many of my soldiers did. And when we pulled together this group at Hampton, Virginia, unless you put the slide up that listed all of them, you couldn't get very many of them to tell you what they were, what we had to be proficient in. Yet whenever a soldier recited the Soldier's Creed, there's a line in there that says "I'm proficient in my warrior task(s) and drills."

Q (Laughs.) That's ironic.

GEN. HERTLING: In fact, what we were doing was claiming something that we weren't (doing). So over a couple-month period we pulled together some folks and really took a hard look at what should be the defining task of every soldier -- what should every soldier be able to do? And we were able to reduce those significantly, because we -- another effect of having so many is we were almost in the realm of a term that I use "task paralysis." There were so many things that we had to train on that we weren't training any of them very well.

So we reduced the ones that were really the key tasks for every soldier, and we now have a list which has been approved by all the Army commands -- universally, by the way, approved, and unanimously approved, and all of them have said it's a damned good idea that we're doing this. They are on their way to the chief of staff of the Army for final approval. So I can't give you any more teaser than that. I hope that the chief looks at them, and likes them, and realizes that all the subordinate commands have said this is what -- where we should go.

Q Can you say at least what the number of those tasks is?

GEN. HERTLING: I can. The recommended number is 15 and four -- I'm sorry, 12 and four, 12 and four.

Q Meaning what?

GEN. HERTLING: Twelve tasks and four drills.

Q Okay. And then that's down from --

GEN. HERTLING: (Inaudible.)

Q -- and that's down from what?

GEN. HERTLING: I think they were 32 and 11.

Q Ouch. Okay.

GEN. HERTLING: And they had varied over the years. Although, they had started off, I think, at 39, or something like that -- or going to 39. So that's just a lot of things that a soldier has to know.

Q Yeah.

GEN. HERTLING: And it was driving some things with -- oh, and by the way, this was connected to basic training, because all of those things that are on the Warrior Task(s) and Drills list have to be introduced in basic. And yet some of those things were not things that soldiers, later on in their career, would ever use. So they'd see it one time and then never see it again.

Q Like what? Can you give an example?

GEN. HERTLING: I can -- it'll get me in trouble. One of the things on the list was -- well, I'll give you two examples: One was, "operate a Claymore mine."

Q Okay.

GEN. HERTLING: Now, a Claymore mine is a Vietnam-era mine. It's one of a family of mines that we currently use today. It is sometimes used in Afghanistan, but you would never use it without some additional training.

Yet we were teaching every single soldier -- and I'll tell you, personally, I've been in the Army 34 years, I'm thinking of making it a career, and I had never touched a Claymore mine in my life.

Q Yeah.

GEN. HERTLING: So the question is, why are we doing that?

Q Okay.

GEN. HERTLING: Another one was the 50-caliber machine gun. Now, you would think, well, all soldiers need to know that. I'm not sure, because if you really look at the number of soldiers that ever use a 50-caliber, after they fire it once in basic training, we were spending an awful lot of time and consuming an awful lot of resources just to give an introduction to something that the great majority of soldiers would never do again.

Q Okay. That's great.

GEN. HERTLING: Now, so if you go to a unit and you become a 50-cal gunner, or that's part of your MOS skills, then, yeah, you ought to get a whole lot more training on that. But we were basically introducing a lot of tasks that were never seen again. So those are two examples.

Q Yeah, okay.

GEN. HERTLING: Anyway, so we went through this Warrior Task(s) and Drills, and that directly links to a complete review of the basic training program of instruction, which we just completed about a week ago after about four months. Now, I was told when I took this job that the movement of any -- a review of any program of instruction, an Army program of instruction would probably take two years to do. So what we did is we put a whole bunch of folks on this -- kind of fire-hosed the people that were working it; had several sessions with the commandants of the various Army schools, and we were able to slap the table on that yesterday and send it forward after a four-month's review.

Q Wow. GEN. HERTLING: And it incorporates many of the things we've learned from combat. It adds some things; deletes a whole lot more; and adjusts others that will make, I think, basic training a lot more relevant and geared toward the kind of fight that we're in now and that we'll be in for the next several years.

Q Specifically, what did you add?

GEN. HERTLING: Let me think. Well, we're adding training on culture. And that seems a little bit fluffy, but it's not. I mean, we just had a presentation yesterday by the Army's Culture Center. You know, as every soldier goes throughout the world -- and I'm not just talking Iraq or Afghanistan, but whenever -- and, in fact, the example they use is a country in Africa, of a culture that is not known by many. And a cultural norm, in this particular class, would get soldiers in trouble if they did the wrong thing.

But there's some vignettes, and we're using some new technologies to show it to our soldiers, that would show them how to adjust not only to the Army culture -- from a civilian environment when they first join, but also help them understand that their career in the service will be a continual requirement to adapt to other cultures, as they travel around the world and do what they do. And, frankly, the adaptation of those cultures will save lives and help them accomplish their missions which, eight years ago, we weren't very good at when we went into some of the Arab countries.

Q Thanks so much. I appreciate it.

GEN. HERTLING: Sure.

MS. KYZER: And Maya Sevenovich (sp), did you have a question?

Q Yeah, I actually do. Thank you so much for being on the call.

I wanted to know about, is social media -- with all the buzz going on with social media, is there going to be any formal training for new enlistees on the proper use of social media and -- (inaudible) --

GEN. HERTLING: Oh, Maya (sp), that's a set up. I got Lindsey (sic) sitting right next to me, and that's a true set up, because she has bent my ear, and beat me up, and made me do all kinds of evil things; and, in fact, she's presenting this afternoon to this group of people, in terms of social media.

It is something that we need to train, not so much our soldiers about, but our leaders about, because there are some, as you know, pratfalls, and some things that can get soldiers in trouble, but it's also an excellent way to communicate. And as you'll see, I mean, we've got a new IMT Facebook page -- not to use the Facebook, not to give them any free advertising. I, personally, am on a Facebook page. We're using Twitter within IMT. Lindsey (sic) is going to do some things this afternoon -- will introduce some other things to our crowd of 200 out here, in terms of what they have to be wary of within their soldiers, but also what they can use to advantage.

The other thing I'll tell you that we're -- we've got a pilot study going on. I'm working this with Lt. Gen. Mike Vane, also of TRADOC, who runs ARCIC, future cell at TRADOC. We are running a pilot within basic training, AIT, BOLC, and within our instructor ranks, something we're calling in the Army world of acronyms "CSDA," Connecting Soldiers to Digital Applications. And what that is, is we're going to issue some -- no, I don't know the non-commercial term, but, and please don't use this, but it's an iPhone-like device that looks an awful lot like an iPhone. (Laughs.)

Q (Laughs.)

GEN. HERTLING: And, you know, I don't want to give anybody any advertisements, but we are using those kinds of devices that we're issuing to soldiers, that I'm using right now. And it's interesting the number of applications that we can pull down that may help this generation of Millennials train better and train faster, and provide information in a better means. So that's all part of this design of using social media.

Q Great. Thank you. That definitely answers my question.

GEN. HERTLING: Okay.

MS. KYZER: And -- (inaudible) -- with RNews, did you have a question?

Q Oh, I definitely have a few questions, if you don't mind.

Back when General Wallace (sp) was there, that's when a lot of these changes came in to basic training, because I think time on the range was increased, time on the field was increased. Because it was necessary for the Army to assign soldiers to units, and the traditional unit training was taken over by basic training and AIT. But one thing he brought up is -- IEDs were relatively new, and I think this goes back to 2003, and he said what we were doing is putting sandbags under barracks, under berths, to see how long it would take soldiers, recruits to find them.

I'm just wondering what you're going to do, perhaps, with IED recognition, situational awareness. Is that going to change in the training?

GEN. HERTLING: It is, J.D. What I'll tell you -- in fact, that's more of a -- that's a bigger issue than just IMT. General Dempsey has appointed Fort Leonard Wood as his IED look. And a guy who -- (laughs) -- it's interesting you say IEDs were first detected in 2003, because that's when I detected my first one, when it blew it up underneath me. But we have since, as you know, gotten a whole lot better in terms of detecting the IED, and there are different levels of what we have to do to fight the IED fight.

You know, the introduction of basic trainees, or AITs, or even lieutenants in BOLC, the Basic Officer Leadership Course, gives them the introduction of who they are as sensors for these things. And yes, we are using the latest technologies. And Brigadier General Bryan Watson, who is the commandant of the Engineers School, who's heading this up, also happened to be my chief of staff in 1st Armored Division during the last deployment we had when we returned in 2008.

So he and I are very well connected in this. We're trying to determine the best ways to get the basic training to the soldiers in IED detection and countering, but at the same time, making -- finding a method to continue to adapt our soldiers within the training base without having to rewrite the POI based on new tactics that the enemy might be using in this realm.

You know, it was interesting, I had a -- just as a segue, I had a discussion with General Paul Gorman, a retired four-star who many of you may know, about IEDs and VBIEDs. We were having a great discussion over a glass of his wine that he makes at his winery now that he's retired, and he said, "You know, these VBIEDs aren't new." He says, "They've been around for a long time." And I said, well, yes, sir, they've been around since about, you know -- the Russians were in Afghanistan. And he goes, "Oh, no, no." And he reminded me that Kamikaze planes were somewhat of a VBIED, a flying VBIED, and that there had been several historical techniques to counter them. That's the first time I had ever really considered that. And we started looking at some historical lessons-learned on that, and we're trying to incorporate some of those kind of (sensings ?), targeting of networks, and gathering of intel that are all part of the more holistic view of countering IEDs.

Q Thank you. Thank you on that.

How is the role of the drill sergeant going to change? That's got to be pretty significant too, since they're the -- they're the mothers and the fathers to recruits.

GEN. HERTLING: Yes, they are. And, you know, I would offer any of you to come down to watch our drill sergeants at work. I have constantly been amazed at what I've seen. I've never been involved -- I consider myself a trainer, but I've never been involved in the individual training realm before. I've always been more "collective trainer" at the NTC or the -- (inaudible) -- and things like that.

What I'm amazed at is how miraculous these young men and women are that are drill sergeants, and how tough of a job this is. I mean, in the old days, when we were an army at peace, you know, a soldier -- a sergeant signed up to be a drill sergeant, volunteered, and was selected. And they knew that their two or three years "on the trail," as they call it, was going to be extremely difficult -- waking up at 4:00 in the morning, being with soldiers all day, going to bed about 10:00 at night, six or seven days a week.

Well, I mean, we've got an even tougher situation now, because the young men and women that are coming in to be drill sergeants have just probably returned from deployment. In fact, yesterday Command Sergeant Major King told me that 98.6 percent of her drill sergeants in the recent class are recent combat returnees -- recent combat veterans. So you take them out of a tough combat environment; you throw them into this very demanding training environment; and then when they leave here they probably go back to a unit that's going back to combat. So the biggest thing I'm concerned about, to be honest with you, is the training of our drill sergeants, and using the time in the training base to sort of ("re-green" ?) them so they can take knowledge back to the units, but at the same time, making sure that their "family quality of life" is balanced. Because, their families -- I mean, their spouses are all saying, hey, I thought we were going to get a break here. And it's anything but a break. In fact, many of them say it's the hardest job they've ever had.

Q Thank you for that.

And this is another quick one. Once the chief approves what changes you recommended --

GEN. HERTLING: Yes.

Q -- how long, how long do you expect it will take to implement all those changes?

GEN. HERTLING: Well, the changes in basic training are being implemented right now. I mean, I made the decision yesterday. That's a decision that I can make.

Q Oh, okay.

GEN. HERTLING: I told the -- I told the team yesterday to start making it.

I think -- and this is going to sound bizarre to you that it will take this long, but I think we'll have it totally implemented by the July time frame. The reason it will take that long is -- I mean, we've got classes in session right now. Today, in the training base, we've got 47,193 soldiers, and they're half way through their training, or at the beginning of their training.

So we've got to sort of continue training those folks, get the drill sergeants read in on -- and the cadre members read in on what they're going to train as part of the new POI. And I think it'll probably take a couple of iterations until we can get that complete. And I was talking to someone yesterday about that. I said, give me a -- give me a (swag ?) in terms of when you think we'll be able to say that the new POI is in effect. And they said, that would probably be July before we can completely say that we're running on all cylinders.

The Warrior Task(s) and Battle Drills that I talked about, those are something that drive training, not only in the training base but also throughout the Army. As soon as the chief approves that, we will put those on the Army Training Network, ATN, which is on AKO, as you know, and that'll be transmitted to the force. And they will be expected to start using that as sort of the baseline for what we're training individual soldiers on. Q Okay. And, I guess finally -- then I'll quit monopolizing here, you called for the elimination of bayonet training, along with the 50-cal --

GEN. HERTLING: (Laughs.)

Q -- if I understand that correctly, and you wanted to stress --

GEN. HERTLING: You don't --

Q -- fighting with hands and knives more.

GEN. HERTLING: Yes.

Q Can you give me a little more information on --

GEN. HERTLING: I would love to clarify that, to be honest with you. We have not eliminated bayonet training.

Q No. Okay.

GEN. HERTLING: That was a sound bite taken out of context. And I clarified it on one blog-site that I actually wrote into, that probably surprised the hell out of the people that run the blog site.

But what I said to the AP reporter was that we had eliminated much of what we used to do, in terms of bayonet training, because we -- first of all, we have a rifle that you can't put a bayonet on. Secondly, the skills that soldiers need in combat is more attuned to fighting with the rifle, and fighting with knives or bayonets. We are not giving up the bayonet; it's just not going to be attached to the end of the rifle.

And, in fact, that's one of the major changes we've made in combatives, that -- General Mike Ferriter, down at the Infantry School, has put together an unbelievably diverse group of fighters, from grapplers (sp), and the Gracie Brothers (sp), and marshal artists, and just fighters and marksmen. We are now on the old bayonet course -- which probably won't exist in a couple of months, we are now, instead of charging dummies with bayonets on the end of rifles, what we're doing is running through obstacle courses, going to pits, fighting with -- fighting each other with pugils, and then continuing on the run.

So it's no longer the fighting of an inanimate object. We actually put some contention in by allowing soldiers to run with helmets and fight with pugil sticks at certain points in the course. We're also incorporating fighting with the rifle as part of the combatives drill; and we're teaching soldiers to stand up and fight, as opposed to wrestle on the ground, which the past combatives used to do. Q Thank you very much, General.

GEN. HERTLING: Thank you.

MS. KYZER: And I'm afraid our time is about up here. But if you have additional questions that we didn't get to, you all have my e-mail address. Send me an e-mail and I'll make sure that General Hertling's office gets that, so you can get a response.

Thank you again, sir, for your time. Do you have any closing remarks?

GEN. HERTLING: Thanks, Lindy.

Yeah, hey, thanks everybody for being interested in this. We really are -- you know, after eight years of war, and learning a lot of things, we really have to play balance, in terms of -- not necessarily

doing more, not necessarily doing less, but doing better. And "better" is sort of our focus, as we continue with this conflict that we're involved in. And I think we've got some excitement within the training base. It's a wonderful place to be assigned right now, and I'm just happy to be not only with the men and women that form the cadres in our three locations, but also their family members, that are sacrificing an awful lot to ensure we continue to produce great soldiers. But thanks for your interest in writing about it too.

MS. KYZER: Thank you, everyone. This concludes the Roundtable.

END.